



Young Ivy On Old Walls

A BOOK OF VERSE

H. Arthur Powell

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1903

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A Book of Verse

H. Arthur Powell



Boston

Richard G. Badger

The Gorham Press

1903

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<i>The Play</i>	.	.	.	MESSRS. CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
<i>Robbed</i>	.	.	.	MR. FRANK A. MUNSEY
<i>Strength in Thrall</i>	.	.	.	TOWN TOPICS
<i>Which?</i>	.	.	.	TOWN TOPICS
<i>Wounded</i>	.	.	.	THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE
<i>The Elfin</i>	.	.	.	THE NEW YORK OBSERVER
<i>Archery</i>	.	.	.	THE WAVERLEY PUBLISHING COMPANY
<i>Death and Derision</i>	.	.	.	TRUTH
<i>A Tragedy of Nature</i>	.	.	.	CONNECTICUT MAGAZINE
<i>The One Appeal</i>	.	.	.	THE LADIES' WORLD
<i>Progression</i>	.	.	.	THE SUCCESS COMPANY
<i>Oranges</i>	.	.	.	INDEPENDENT
<i>Autumnal Eve</i>	.	.	.	CRITERION
<i>Haunted</i>	.	.	.	THE CRITIC

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1

*“—Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”*

—As You Like It.

Autumnal Morn

Where shadows fall, the frost lies ashen grey,
But dies in tears where morning sunbeams play.

The pied fields slow put off the mantling chill,
And warmer pigments touch the trees and hill

Where bronze and scarlet leaves, in groups and rows,
Like harlequins extravagantly pose.

Brown, naked briers explore the hollowed ditch,
And glint of guinea gold makes Nature rich.

Dark, snakelike roots are mastering the grass;
Still color riots o'er the earthy mass.

The mounting sun releases cold-bound scents
From green-tinged, sable bark, and saffron bents.

Imperial day exposes to the view

The moldering pomp of Summer's retinue;
Yet seems that court, defying still grim Time,
More glorious in ruin than in prime.

Beneath the foot, each rut and ridge grows kind,
The harsh earth softens, and becomes resigned.

The damp of dying leaves imbues the air,
Portending Winter's melancholic care.

The stream runs quieter than in Summer's time,
With less of merriment than musing rhyme;

For while in Spring it sang a song of hope,
And later raced delirious down the slope,

Now coming coma makes its presence known,
Deposes joyance, and assumes the throne

The wounded leaves fall with their final breath—
Eccentric flambeaux, flick'ring on white death,
Like Romance tincturing grave Tragedy.

Autumnal Eve

O'er warm-lipped waters and fruit-laden land,
O'er barge and wherry, cot and shelt'ring tree,
Broods that soft spirit which the good God planned
Should bring heart's ease to man, — to shore and sea
That low-ton'd peace on which the soul is fed;
By which Age loses fear, and takes instead
A gentle majesty, and some sweet grace
That's lacking e'en in Youth's heart-winning face.

Slow sinks the sun beyond the round world's rim,
Insensibly advance the silent shades;
The last glow passes, and the vesper winds
Breathe benediction as the landscape fades.

After the Rain

Like silver wires against a sable field
Impetuous torrents had plunged down to earth.
As grief, relieved by tears, to peace may yield,
So Spring's young emerald ardors have new birth.

Rain pools; damp gravel; water-laden boughs;
Wet moss, like vivid oils but fresh laid on;
A grateful, earthy smell; — a shower endows
The world with these, before it passes on.

A million million diamonds leap as one;
Leaves sway excited, like applauding crowds,
As, swimming buoyantly, the warring Sun,
Pale but victorious, shoulders through the clouds.

The Mummers

Before us lie the rouséd seas ;
Above, the dark sky bends ;
Behind, the curving line of cliff
Its massive scenery lends.
The restive waves are up and out,
And mimics born are they ;
The running ones, with many a shout,
At skirmish, bloodless battle, rout,
Right skilfully do play.

The lightning makes its swift allonge
Across the scowling sky ;
Its cendent path the clouds expunge,
Whose growls the seas outvie.
Orchestral winds wail minor strains ;
The mumming waves straightway
Assume their parts. Though copious rains
Fall on their tossing, hoary manes,
The mood brooks no delay.

Some, snarling beasts with cruel white teeth,
A-wrestling as they run ;
Here girls trip 'round a sea-flower wreath ;
There walks a shrouded nun.
Here, bravos pulling down their prey ;
There, some conspirator
Crouched, waiting Life to pass his way ;
Here, this one would brave Toro play
To that one's Toreador.

On, restless souls! — assume strange shapes;
Play Passion, Pride, and Will;
For that which man's poor folly apes
May set man thinking still
Wild horsemen charge midst war's alarms;
And now they charge no more.
But mourning women, hopeless swarms,
Turn landward, moan, fling up white arms,
And fall upon the shore.

The Invitation

Come! —

Where great bees hang, love-languid, on the nectarous lips
of roses,
While, close at hand, the lily on the glassy pool reposes.
The fretwork of the boughs frames in the clear cerulean
space;
To shade our sylvan couch for us the cool leaves interlace.
Below, the brook is whispering in the ears of blushing
flowers,
And turf assumes such freshness as is giv'n by vernal
showers.
The buds breathe perfumed messages the boyish breezes
carry;
Sprigs, with detaining gesturement, beseech each breeze to
tarry.
Things tremulously pendulous respond to zuffolo-notes
That fall, cascades of music, from a thousand tiny throats.
There frond and floret, beam and zephyr, laugh and love
and play,
With all the rare allurement of a golden Summer day.

Running Water

A Carol of Easter.

'Tis in the early morning,
Rosy light the earth adorning
And the little cascades leaping
In their glee from cleft to cleft.
Wet with spray, the grey rocks glisten ;
And the songsters pause to listen
To the never-sleeping waters
With their silver-flashing weft.

Beneath the roar and ripple
And the rock-cave's gurgling tipple
Is a gentler tone, and sweeter,
That a wondrous story tells.
There are trees their secrets telling ;
And in their sway and swelling
The heart may drink with rapture
Of the knowledge of the bells.

But in the water's humming
Is a hope of Something coming —
A promise of the longed-for,
Of peace and pure delight.
Disperse the dark cloud-masses ;
The myth of Sorrow passes,
And Mind and Maker are at one —
The triumph's with the Right.

Evening

Quiet falls the dusk along the village road;
Its cadence carries peace, and in its heart
It holds the fragrance of the folded flowers.
Now something drowsy cheeps; and something drops,
With distant, hollow note, into the pond.
These few half-sounds, and these alone, convey
The last contented nestlings of earth's elves.
The hedge, an uncouth mound scarce known as green,
Marks out the dipping road, a layer of grey;
The dark canal lurks underneath the bridge.
'T is claustral-still; upon the obscure world
A star looks wanly down from heights of space.
A balmy tepor swathes material things;
Mesmeric lethargy enfolds the sense.
I fit the mystic hollow of the night
As fits the nut its pale green cerement.
A sound evolves itself from out the peace —
A horseman, spurring o'er the lower path;
The coffin'd hoofs drum out a dull tattoo,
Approaching in crescendo. . . Then away,
Diminuendo, faint and fainter still.
And now I know not hoof-beats from my heart-beats.
Beat — beat — I dream. . . I wake. . . Lo, it is dark.

A Tragedy of Nature

Environed by the rude and wild a lovely flower grew;
Her tinted petals, velvet-piled, gleamed 'neath the crystal dew.

By contrast with the chill, grey earth her beauty was
enhanced,
And ever as the breeze did pipe she sweetly, shyly
danced.

One day a bold young bee flew by, upon some business
bent,
When suddenly she caught his eye, and quite changed his
intent.

So back he flew, the flower to woo; she blushed as
he alighted,
And yet methinks I had a view of eyes whose glance
invited.

So courtly was the young bee's grace, such ease in every
motion,

So thrilling was his mellow bass, like the sea-shell's song
of ocean,

That, while she blushed and hung her head, yet lis-
tened she, enchanted,
And ere he sung his heart's desire, his heart's desire
was granted.

The morrow came; again I trod the steps of yestermorn,
And came again upon the spot where ill-starred love was
born.

The pain of pity touched my heart, for prone upon
her bed,

Broken, faded, and alone, there lay the flower — dead.
Her healthy bloom and beauty gone, and gone her singing
lover

Who but the day before had hung so dotingly above her.

What was it broke her trusting heart — was she
deceived, forsaken?

Or was she by the wanton Wind rude-buffeted and
shaken

Until her fair head drooped to earth, and with one per-
fumed sigh

She yielded up to him her life to swell his lusty joy?

And did the bee, returning from his work at set of
sun,

Behold with grief the murder that the wicked Wind
had done?

Vain, vain our speculation. God knows, who marks the
fall

Of bird and man and nation; he knows the truth, and all.

The mysteries of nature lie open to his eye;

He knows the cause of action, and the springs of
tragedy.

Winter Dethroned

O radiant, bewitching, smiling Summer !

Come from thy southern gardens to our zone.

Queen Summer ! We will crown thine head with flowers

And help thee oust old Winter from the throne.

Nay, it should be no trouble to depose him, —

Smile but on him, and speak thy royal decree,
And he will do thy bidding and depart,

E'en though he after die from love of thee.

Thine eyes, that mirror stars' and fireflies' twinkle,

Thy bosom, warm and generously kind,

Thy sun-flushed arms, whose motions are expressions
Of majesty and grace and love combined —

All bring us worshipping unto thy feet,

Merging our gaze in thine, ourselves in thee.

Listen ! the laughter of the water comes,

Making the ambient air dance merrily.

The white blood of the gaunt, ungainly trees

Starts at thy footfall ; bright-eyed, hairy things

Peep from obscure retreats ; the hedge is filled

With flutterings of confused, ambitious wings.

At thine approach the birds' fantasia starts ;

Creation stirs, and wakes from her long sleep.

Come quickly, glorious goddess, in thy beauty,

And we will crown thee Queen of land and deep !

Sunset

The golden Sun is passing down the sky,
As sinks a great balloon, its life escaping,
And nears the shimmering, molten Western Sea.
The white, puffed clouds, agleam with splendid light
Reflected from the stately King of Day,
Hang anxiously upon his skirts of gold
As if deplored royalty's departure.
Down, and still downward sinks he, watching still
His lustrous image in the welcoming waters,
As eyes of lovers, meeting, gaze with rapture
Into each other's glad yet mystic depths.
Murmur now caressingly the waves,
Indolently heaving toward his light
And purring out their homage and their love.
How different these whispers, soft and low,
To that wild roaring, hissing voice of ire
The presence of the Storm-king e'er evokes.
Still slipping, slowly slipping, as a mind
Slips into sleep from waking consciousness ;
And still the proud Sea murmurs, " Come, my King !
Rest in these arms ; forget the irk of rule
And be my subject, O my King, to-night."
Then, willingly obedient, he delays not,
But enters the fair chambers of the Sea.
And as he goes Night, waiting at the portal,
Draws to the massive curtain of the dark
And dooms the world to blindness for a time.

The Hour and the Infinite

A stream, a gentle-flowing stream,
And I face-downward lying on the bank
At its brink.
The day, too, flowing like a tranquil dream ;
Blossoms pink
And blossoms white on shrub and green-clad bough ;
And now,
Flitting before my eyes,
Two butterflies
Soon stream and sky
And bud and butterfly
All vanish from the theatre of my sense ;
Yet, two blue eyes wherein Love nestles shyly,
Two silken cheeks, two dimples playing coyly,
Make recompense — aye, more than recompense.

Dear, lulling dream of perfect happiness —
Stay with me but one hour, no more, no less ;
Then with a sigh, as dream to memory fades
Like day retreating down the darkening glades,
I rise, and front my Winter unafraid ;
For since such good has been vouchsafed me once,
What is it but a promise ? Then ensconse
Thee, Faith, within my being's throne ;
Hold high thy gleaming sceptre ; let its cone
Of rays light but one step the dangerous grade
And, confident, I hold the path alone.

Reads not Life thus, in person, brute, and pod? —
The face of Nature and the face of Love
Once glimpsed by us who rove, and seek, and rove,
Prepare the steadfast for the face of God.

11

In Varying Moods

Death and Derision

Love have I tasted, and its daring bliss
Hath bid me chant defiance to the storm.
Once, cast ashore before the foiled waves' hiss,
Beneath cold flesh my heart was bold and warm.

Wine have I drunk, with perfect throat of youth;
The grapes' blood flowed with mine the veiny maze;
With quickened sense my body glowed, in truth,
Like startled Dian's 'neath Actaeon's gaze.

Joys fugitive, joys fugitive replace—
All that to youth's fair heritage belong;
Perhaps the purest, after fight or chase,
To swoon in Music's arms, or live with Song.

At last, at close of some fierce, bloody strife,
O Powers above! — when painful comes the breath,
Grant me this last, this crowning joy of life —
To laugh at Death!

Robbed

At morn, in the shade of a linden tree,

A youth lay asleep, and dreamed,
Unconscious of chanting bird and bee,
With a careless grace that was good to see.

One loved of the gods he seemed.

In dreams came the sense of dreams fulfilled —

A maiden's winning ; a world's esteem ;
Through manhood's prime he loved, worked, willed,
Helped those who builded and those who tilled,
Solved nature's secrets for mankind's good ;
Till honored age, as is right it should,
Brought rest. Thus ran the dream.

At eve, as the sunlight sought the sea

At the edge of the far sky line,
An old man woke 'neath the linden tree —

May his wakening ne'er be thine !
He gazed about ; and fear appeared
As a ghost of his 'wilder'd brain ;
He looked at the sun ; he looked at his beard ;
And then at the sun again.

He gasped. The gloom massed in the east.

He shrieked ; he tore his hair ;
He writhed as some poor captured beast
Fast in a forest snare.

“ ‘Tis night, life’s night ! ” he piteous cried,
“ This morn, how fair all seemed !

I've been robbed of my treasures, youth, hope, pride —
Robbed as I slept and dreamed ! ”

The Elfin

An old woman, in quavering soliloquy :

I sit in my high-backed, oaken chair
In the dusky twilight-time
And, waiting, nod as I hear the clocks
Make distant, dreamy chime.

Then, just as the last faint stroke dies out
In a sweet, metallic hum,
There comes a patter of two wee feet,
And I know the Elfin's come.

I make no sound, nor move a hand,
Nor open my fast-closed eyes ;
Yet riotous joy within my breast
Demands to clasp its prize.

She's looking at me so gravely now —
I can feel that wondering gaze.
And now warm fingers with velvet touch
My eyelids strive to raise.

A dart of the hand, and I have her fast.
With a cry half mirth, half fear,
She springs to my lap and kisses my lips
And nestles my bosom near.

What greater joy can the future hold,
Or Memory's mind recall?

My sweet little, dear little Elfin Queen,
 My darling, my love, my all !

These arms were made to encircle her,
 This breast to support her head. . .
There's an ache and a void in my lonely heart
 When the Elfin goes to bed.

I've heard them say that the Elfin died
 Long years ago — long years !
They say I am but a poor old crone
 Alone with my hopes and fears.

They say — but I care not what they say,
 For I know my love's not dead ;
She'll come tomorrow when twilight falls —
 She's only gone to bed.

.

*They find her, sleeping her last long sleep
 In her high-backed, oaken chair,
And marvel to see the heav'ly smile
 In place of the lines of care.*

*Then softly murmurs a woman's voice :
 “ She has left all care and wrong
And has gone to the land where the Elfin went,
 To be with her all day long.”*

A Problem Solved

With a crease in his brow and a puzzled eye,
 Yet withal a dignity deep and wise,
The Boy gazed up at a spangled sky
 And sought The Reason That Underlies.

He pondered long, but at last there broke
 A dawn of knowledge; conviction grew.
“These star-things, Popsy,”—and Wisdom spoke,—
 “Hain’t they the holes w’ot the rain comes through?”

Progression

Hast ever touched the height of conscious power
 When force of thine, opposing force, hath won?
If not, then take for once the golden dower,
 And find the cost forgotten when ’t is done.

Attainment is the herald of high hope,
 The spur to further conquest; a delight
Imparting will to do and strength to cope;
 To him that hath is giv’n; flight strengthens flight.

First take the principles of simple good,
 Then strive,— and all that’s good shall dwell in thee.
Yet strive not straining, be that wile withstood,
 And thou ahalt learn the joyance of the free.

The Orbit of Genius

Poe, star of mystery, could not guide his course,
But, plunged by some malign, internal force
Into dark doom, left the seen firmament,
His fires, too bright to last, too quickly spent.

When radiant Marlowe flashed across the sky
To his extinguishment in vulgar rye,
Short was his flight, brief his career in rhyme;
Yet Shakespeare set his clock by Marlowe's time!

Among those names that scarce have had their due,
DeQuincey's height few glasses carry to.
Gigantic strength in thrall to unseen spells;
A hopeless Romance, sung by captive bells.

Why multiply examples, but to find
A mild reproof for the censorious mind?
If genius were quite perfect, it would be,
Not genius, but full-armed divinity!

The Athlete's Arm

Some sing of the play of a woman's face,
And the features' nameless charm ;
But more to me the leonine grace
Of an athlete's naked arm.

As it rests on the rim of a light canoe,
Or swells with the swinging oar,
There's not a swan on the water's blue
But holds its proud head lower.

Where the shot is put and the hammer hurled,
Or the vaulting pole is seen,
The arm, the arm is king o' the world,
And king of its fairest Queen !

The symbol of power and the tool of will,
With a beauty all its own,—
Since ancient Grecian days, with skill
Has it been extolled in stone.

The first to answer its country's call,
The bravest in the fight ;
The first to scale the hostile wall,
The last to sleep at night.

Then, whether on land, will conquering weight,
Or spurning the brine and barm,
Here's health — and the hope of a worthy mate ! —
To the athlete's naked arm !

To That Immortal One

Canst thou, O high-browed Shakespeare, hear the sound
Of human plaudits, swept the world around?

Canst see the curling smoke of sacrifice
Against the blue of our encasing skies?

Mark, first, the universal, reverent prayer
That, like ascending incense on the air,
Exalts the Sacred Books.

The fires burn low.

Bend now thine ear. Note well the murmurous flow
That swells like musings of a mighty sea
And links thy name with Immortality.

No impious view our attitude impels —
Neighboring Divinity, the Human dwells;

And while, in shining word and clear intent,
Precept with practice, law with reason blent,
With symbols simple as the abacus,
Almighty God reveals Himself to us; —

In thy wide works, by knaves, kings, beggars, elves,
Thou, Shakespeare, hast revealed us to ourselves!

Master and Man

The guests have gone ; the flick'ring lights burn low ;
Yet, in the gloom, the titled host still sits
And forces still his satiate throat to drink.
Before the relics of the feast he sits,
His rumpled linen drenched with fumy wine ;
His lips distorted by a sensuous smile ;
His blear eyes frozen in a tipsy leer,
Their whites o'erveined with bloody, branching lines.
His face, a pallid mask of flaccid dough ;
The lines of age upon the scroll of youth ;
The golden throne of health usurped by weakness ;
The crystal reason fogged by dissipation ;
The chains of habit dragging at his heels ;
The knell of bliss forever in his ears.

Now, which the vassal — which the whip-lashed slave ?
The man who lives and labors, loves and dies,
Or this foul, loathsome thing, this murderer
Who strangles — God in Heav'n ! — his own fair soul ?
Yet him the social world calls gentleman ! . . .
To kill the weeds that press with vicious claws
The throat of produce : or to slowly kill
The mind, the heart, the spirit-life — which choose ye ?

Exalted, laureled, be the brow of labor
Above all rank and wealth ; the plow is purpose,
And purpose is an attribute divine.
Two natal rights hath man that sweeten life —
The right to labor, and the right to love ;

And nurture of the ground is noble toil ;
The fairest things of earth spring from the soil.
The curse primeval and the knell to ease
Meant birth of soul, and immortality.
By work comes vict'ry, and by vict'ry, peace —
Peace, plenty, love, and happiness ; and Heav'n.

The other, — what of him and his dread tale
Of wasted time and tissue, brain and brawn,
His birthright bartered for a year's mad pleasure ?
Christ's pity only can rebuild in him
The vision and the song he overthrew !

Work on, O kings of earth, this truth in mind :
Spade, ax, and pen are sceptres for man's hand ;
Look thou beyond, and not beneath the sod ;
The thralls of labor are the sons of God.

III

“About it and about :”

The Rubáiyát.

Which ?

Life's a lighted torch on a Winter's night ;

Blow, ye gales, blow!

Now flick'ring weakly, now burning bright,
Its flame rough-tossed like a ship's headlight,
To sink at last from our mortal sight.

Blow, ye gales, blow!

Men are marionettes on a mimic stage ;

Laugh, ye gods, laugh !

Who dance and tremble and strut and rage
Yet cannot break from their painted cage —
Dolls that war on the Fates would wage !

Laugh, ye gods, laugh !

Death's a river as black as pitch ;

Quail, ye strong, quail !

Sooner or later, poor or rich,
Time ferries us over the loathsome ditch
To find — oblivion? hell? heaven? — which?
Quail, ye strong, quail !

Regeneration

How true he might be, if he had but a cause to be true to ;

How strong, if he loved but some weakness, — how
quick to defend ;

How suppliant, too, with a conquering something to sue
to —

If life had but definite meaning, and logical end !

If matter and flesh were but symbols that someone might
read him, —

If only one spirit should vindicate Life in her life,
Should show him that God and the order of being could
need him,

How gladly he'd curse the fiend's logic, and joy in
the strife.

The adequate influence ! memory is not sufficient ;

Experience, past, is but memory fading to ash.

A knowledge e'er present must ray from the high-throned
Omniscient

Through mediums of qualities known, — no ephem-
eral flash.

How name it, this regeneration that confounds all science ;

That silences skeptics ; and troubles the heart of the
proud ?

Is it a fever ; a dreaming ; or some real alliance

Accomplished by faith in the tale of a cast-away
shroud ?

Comes it by love, by affliction, by reason and will-power ?

Or by some accession of joy that develops the soul ?

Or is it some influence hidden, some unknown and still
power

That whispers no Part can account for the glorious
Whole ?

Where Knowledge Halts

I take thee, Death, as some pale, hideous mask,
Into mine hands. I scan thine outward form
With eager eye, to learn thine inward sense ;
Then turn with sickening from the hopeless task.
Form ! thou art formless as the fear inspired.
Sense ! thou art senseless as the shuddering storm
That seems to feel, yet only makes to feel —
'Tis we who feel, who fall for thine offence.
Dread leper, ghoulish eater of fair flesh —
Art thou the usher of Oblivion's court?
The rescuer of the dying torch of life ?
Or he who breaks the vial, and frees the essence
To wider service and more glorious use ?
Laugh at my fruitless studies an' you will —
No creed, no poem, no philosophy
Stands one pace nearer to thine awful throne.

Interpretation in Art

Erstwhile a Painter, with his magic brush,
Pictured a peasant leaning on his hoe.
The theme was simple ; but the Artist's power
Made paint and canvas fraught with eloquence.
Yet 'twas the eloquence of music — vague,
And subject to diverse interpretations.
*Two men, enraptured, hear soft strains of music ;
And one, in love, declares the theme is Love.
The other, sorrowing, says it tells of Death.
And both are right ; and neither ; for emotion*

*In pleasure touches pain; and pain and pleasure
Each owe existence one unto the other.*
A Poet saw the picture, and construed it
A mute appeal to Heav'n; a curse invoked
Against the lords and rulers of the land.
And yet, if curse it be, 'tis curse primeval,
Which God imposed on man that He might bless him.
And thus again we glimpse the grim dependence
Of right on wrong, of bliss on misery —
The untold secret of the whirling worlds
Before whose mysteries man stands aghast.

The Lesson

The first flush of manhood, and Freedom loud calling;
Pride for a crown; for a kingdom, the world.
Vision perverted, and Truth's statue falling.
Ecstasy. . . Cloying. . . A scroll unfurled:

" *Ere daylight be valued, the black night must come.
Ere speech be valued, loved lips must be dumb.
Let Old Age dog us, and Pain's cruel whips flog us,—
Youth, health, and beauty seem pleasures intense;
But Horror must hold us, the fiend's arms enfold us,
Ere laws and their Maker appeal to our sense."*"

Enough of the dark — dawn, morning light!
Come again, breath of God's own pure flowers.
Things of the night, — back to the night!
The realms of the upper air are ours.

Lost Paradise

How well the gates are guarded ! Those who pass
By ignorance or wilfulness from out
The charméd pale, lose, like a misted glass,
All clear reflective power and, losing, doubt.

Aye, even memory fails ; Truth is exchanged,
Unconsciously, for black Illusion's spell ;
False argument builds up, — the brain deranged, —
A false belief that serves Hell's purpose well.

Dark spirits haste to drug the human food
And mingle Lethe with the earthly wine ;
Delirious desire leaps up, flame-hued,
Devouring greedily the spark divine.

That awful Presence with the fiery brand
Is but a parable ; yet easier far
To overcome such visible command
Than press against an unseen scimitar !

And still, at times, some pure, exalting strain
Floats o'er the walls, creating vague unrest ;
Reviving longings that too long have lain
In deep, unnatural slumber, in the breast.

And then, perhaps, some few flower-petals swim
Into the outer air upon the sound,—
Celestial butterflies that dip and skim,
Whose very perfume is a lethal wound !

And why should mignonette disturb the peace,
 But that its odor is the tenuous ghost
Of something well-belovéd, whose decease,
 Thus now and then recalled, rebukes the boast?

Ah, can it be that when man drinks red wine
 Or satisfies his lust at direful cost,
'T is not so much to taste the joys of swine,
 As to forget the joy that he has lost?

When in full, tidal influx memory comes —
 As come it must one day, — to him again :
When near and nearer roll the distant drums
 In awful answer to his cynic “ When? ” —

In that dread *Now* clairvoyance is restored —
 One passion-stirring glimpse, as all turns black ;
And after that, we know not. Light is poured
 A moment on the eyes : then life-strings crack.

Some few there are who fight against their doom ;
 Like one going blind who, straining frantic'ly
Gloom to dispel, but hastens on that gloom, —
 So they but quicken dread calamity.

Why censure those who drift upon the stream,
 And praise those who would pierce the tanglewood ?
We sleep ; we dream ; all action is but dream —
 Heav'n grant the dreams be good !

The Prisoners

Dogmatic, blind-born Reason, and young Faith !
Behold them, prisoned in the cell of Life,
That polygon of adamantine walls —
That shaft, unroofed save by the pall of Death
Thrown o'er its mouth.

Here cast, the differing twain,
Made comrades by like fate, seek the beyond.
Old Reason turns attention to the walls
And strives to learn their nature and their cause ;
While Faith stands looking, by some instinct, up
Toward where the pall in threat'ning blackness rolls.
From wall to wall blind Reason feels his way,
And names them Matter, Being, Self, Will, Mind,
And other ; yet with differing names they all
Are diamond-proof, insoluble ; built up
By That which ever baffles and eludes.

Faith's breath, sent forth in gentle, upborne prayer,
Uplifts the pall, and for a moment's space
He sees, beyond the veil, a star . . . and God.
“Look ! — see !” he cries, intent to share his joy, —
“The revelation !” Points he all in vain,
Provoking only querulous response.
“Peace, fool ! ‘See, see !’ — I know not what ye mean.
There is no sight. Naught's known save tactile things.”
Trust, Faith, thine eyes. The truth o'erpowers denial.
Eat wholesome bread, nor take the proffered stone.
Since even evil points benign control,
Hope, fearless live, and fearless face the end.

The Arc of Life

This life is a pendulum's arc. Tho' it dip
 Into doom at the depth of the swing,
Twice ecstasy's touched to the once of despair;
Tho' cessation of force leave it hanging down there —
 So 'twould seem, — yet we know
That the Power never dies which decrees life from life;
 That to give
Seems the object of death and the goal of all strife.
Then thank God, and in thanking Him,
 Live !

Oranges

In the rind dwells the good of sight;
 In the pulp dwells the good of taste;
The smell of it all is keen delight,
 And never a quality goes to waste.

The rind despised? — thine eyes are ill!
 The pulp rejected? — thy palate's wrong!
Doth not the scent delight? — then kill
 Evil in thee, and go forth with song!

Wounded

God knows I fought ; yet vainly fought.
I sometimes fain would die
And sleep, as only dead men sleep,
Beneath His pitying eye.
Yet rather would I live to fight
 And, fighting grandly, win.
I do not ask for wealth or ease,
 But this— O God ! O sin !

And is it but the fools and weak
 Who yield, and wounded lie ?
Nay, but the noblest souls sometimes
 Fight, lose, lie down to die ;
For with the higher sense of life —
 Of beauty, bliss, and all —
Come armed temptations never known
 To lives that creep and crawl.
Then, great Physician, guiding still
 The crying weak along,
Forget not, but be merciful
 Unto Thy wounded strong !

The Germ of Immortality

What food shall Spirit feed on, to acquire
Existence independent of the flesh?
What flamy point shall kindle that Greek fire
Death's waters cannot quench, but may refresh?
Theosophy gives Tanha as the cause —
That deep desire for life that stirs the breast
And, overcoming Nature's primal laws,
Becomes, one host tired out, another's guest.
And yet, by loss we gain; by gain we lose;
Then greatest loss must needs bring greatest
gain —
When pure Renunciation's blood imbrues
The altar of high purpose, Death is slain!
So place we one power Tanha's power above;
Not Tanha is the causal force, — but Love !

Of Little Faith

So walk we on, stumbling o'er truths unknown
As over stones in some dark, rugged road,
And cursing, as it trips us, every stone;
Blaming the path, and not the needless load
Of ignorance we carry on our backs;
And still, though hunger oft the body racks,
Ignore the great key-truth for which Christ bled —
That Heav'n, invoked, transmutes these stones to
bread.

To-Morrow

To-day white clouds, like lobes of canvas swelling,
Hang in the blue.

Light, pendent greenery
Sways in a happy languor. Music's welling
From feathered throats. All Summer's scenery
Is born anew.

Youth leaps within us, ne'er one thought of sorrow;
All hope, all joy, lives in that word, "To-morrow."

Men grown, we man the battle-line of life,
Conscript of fate.

A weed of bitterness
Invests the best of us, a growth of strife.
Gay costumes fade, arms seem to glitter less
To us of late.

Each day we hear the cry of mankind's sorrow;
No other promise holds the coming morrow.

Old, old we are; yet — strange! — with age comes peace,
A calm repose.

Nature gives eagerly
As she gave long ago, of her increase.
Nay, generous always she; we meagrely
Picked, culled, and chose.

We find again the old, the lost Ideal;
To-morrow, — ah, to-morrow makes it real!

The House and the Occupant

What things ye know,
Take them, and make them and mold them so,
As to lightly suggest in each curve and line
The grace that is yours, and the good that is mine,
And the bad — ah, let that go !

Thus shall ye add
To the sum of good, and the ill and sad
Decrease, — for the total of elements
Is ever fixed ; and from human tents
Shall flee the curséd bad.

What things ye hold,
Clay things or marble, or things of gold —
They are that matter whose soul is mind.
What can withstand the invisible Wind?
For the subtile is ever the bold.

And so it stands.
Till it please God to separate will from hands,
Till the House and the Dweller are bidden to part,
Volition must keep clear the springs of the heart
And enforce the law's commands.

So thus it reads :
To the building up of a deathless I
Goes one essential — Sincerity ;
And he who faces with words and deeds
The Truth, like the Truth shall never die.

II

“— and Thou.”

The Rubāiyāt.

The One Appeal

“Unpolished, unlettered, yet strong and true”—

Aye, Love, you have sketched me well.

My speech is rugged, my words are few;

What then? — for no words can tell.

You'd have me liken your eyes to jewels,

Your lips to a scarlet bloom? —

The rainbow like to your colored crewels;

Night, to a darkened room!

Oh, the wind's the wind,

The sea's the sea;

Night's night;

Then what are words to me?

No similes, none, do the truth appease;

Few words but are breathed in vain.

Come, bare thy throat to the scurrying breeze

And laugh at the touch of rain.

Green are the leaves in Nature's school,

Health in the turf's rare smell,

And better the heav'n of a healthy fool

Than a wise man's morbid hell.

Oh, the wind's the wind;

The sea's the sea;

Life's life,

And you are life to me!

Sweet, salt, or acid — all are sweet;

In the earth's antiphony

The bark of a dog is a joy complete

As the song of a bird or bee,
Time's turning wheel, the disc of change,
 Makes clear and pure all streams;
Makes new familiar, old seem strange,
 Dreams real, and real things dreams.

Oh, the wind's the wind,
The sea's the sea;
Life's life —
Come live it, Love, with me!

The Play

The play is on. They sit ;
 She sees the stage
And watches every action there portrayed.
He sees but her, and seeing her sees all —
 Her face a page
Whereon the play is scriven, bit by bit ;
He reads, and when she smiles, unconscious maid,
His lips into the mold of hers do fall.

Love loses ; on her cheek
 There shines a pearl.
Love triumphs ; in her eyes there sits a song.
Dreams he : if Imitation claim a tear,
 Then, tend'rest girl,
What, what would Passion claim ? — nay, fool and weak,

You want not tears and pity, but you long
To make the love-light in those eyes appear !

Below them, pipe of wood
And rosined string
All vibrate softly, whispering of Hope ;
Then as his heart beats higher with the thought
Of reigning king,
Burst into strains of triumph. Leap, O blood !

The curtain's down. Lights up ! — the play is o'er.
She sighs; he sighs; and Romance is no more.

The Approach

Up springs the Sun from his bed i' the sea ;
The drowsy dew awakes;
Birds' notes leap from the ragged tree ;
The long grass stirs and shakes.

Is it Dawn, with her fingers of rose-pink hue
And her low, low laugh of mirth,
That calls the songsters, fires the dew,
And vivifies the earth ?

Aye ; rosy herald of coming day,
Yet brings she more. I hear
A satin foot in its rhythmic play —
Thou'rt coming ! — nay, thou'rt here !

Passion Mars-Inspired

My heart, Belov'd, is bleeding
From angor of desire;
And yet you pass unheeding
The passion you inspire.

I've prayed to thee with glances ;
I've spoken with mine eyes ;
Yet all my shy advances
In vain have sought replies.

My lips are sealed to silence
As woman's lips must be ;
Yet no impassioned violence
Could tell how I love thee.

As beats the prisoned pinion
Against the cage's bars,
My heart demands dominion
O'er thee, O son of Mars !

Thou, sentry o'er the sleeping,
Called brave among the brave ;
And I, — a woman weeping,
As babes the cold moon crave.

Ah, foolish, vain ambition !
He who has conquered, spurns ;
The fire of his ignition
Its victim cruelly burns.

Burn on, red flame, and spare not,
For youth and joy are doomed.
He cares not, and I care not,
How soon the fuel's consumed.

The Introduction

'Twas but brief, that moment's meeting
In a room, with many by ;
And conventional the greeting,
Gravely formal the reply.
Yet, to me, the dancers faded
As I looked upon thy face,
And its features gave, unaided,
Quite new aspect to the place.
Then I knew, by some moon-magic,
I must love thee, even I —
Speak thee further, know thee better,
Hold thee closer, ere we die.

Proudly sweet thy lips' firm curving ;
Eyes for which a soul might die ;
Charms not dominant, but serving ;
Yet I weighed not these — not I.
These were incomplete expression
Of the Self enthroned within,
Which was — pardon the ingression, —
Chaste as Daphne, sweet as sin.
And my true Self called to thy Self ;
“ I must win thee ! ” all its cry —
“ Speak thee further, know thee better,
Hold thee closer, ere we die ! ”

The Lover

Ye wrinkled fruits, that startled bloom hath flown,—
Scowl, censure,—for the privilege is thine own!

Ye frown on Love, yet, doth not Envy lurk,
Poor canker-worm, beneath Time's handiwork?

Though ye be sane,—and sad; and old,—and blue;
And we be young,—and happy; giddy?—true!—

Yet would we rather sip the grape, and laugh,
Than hold Life futile, and thy tansy quaff.

The young boy-god was cradled in a kiss—
That culmination of precarious bliss,
That soft assault that beats down Heav'n's door
Or, failing, leaves it barred for evermore!

I won my venture. Ye who failed, despair.
Sad must ye be, but sour,—nay, nay, forbear!
Forbid us not to worship at Love's fane,
For who, once tasting madness, would be sane?

Moon, sea-glint, gossamer, gemmed velvet sky—
All these are real, despite noon's brazen cry.
If Pang be real, why, then, not Promise, too?
If naught be real,—then choose the happier view!

So Love for me, with all its high delights;
Its clare-obscure, its prizes, its mock-frights;
The clasping of Her in one's arms, while She
Stands tiptoe on the peak of ecstasy!

Aileen

'Twas a name, once, to agitate hearts
As the musical breeze imparts
 To the loftiest tree-tops a swaying.
A tremulous aura was born when 'twas voiced ;
Such soul-song as is born
 When the fountain is playing.
Frond and bloom wreathed it ;
All Nature breathed it —
 “*Aileen!*” — and again, “*Aileen!*”

Silent the voices are now.
As the veil and the vow
 Hush not only sorrow, but longing,
 So shapes came between
Nay, why count the cost ?
My love is lost —
 Lost as thy soul, Aileen.

Must thy goal be the sod?
No one sin condemned thee,
But that termed the Real
O'erthrew the Ideal.
Ask the flower why it dies ;
Ask the babe why it cries.
What is it? a lapse of God?

Marriage

Beneath a hundred lilies
Her pale, dead body lies ;
The unseen incense rises,
Accepted sacrifice.

By certain gain of vision, —
By sure access of grace, —
I know her soul has left her
To dwell with mine a space.

And while, alone, I vainly
Might seek to pass Heav'n's gate,
Merged in her truth and beauty
I cheat Satanic hate.

Then, ah ! to dream together
O'er paths her spirit trod ;
Until at one great dawning
Both wake, to meet our God.

The Deity o' the Dell

A haunted dell I know full well —
A heav'n for wing and fin
That must have been the Garden's site,
Before that bout took place when Right
Lost the fall to Sin.
Sunlight, foliage-filtered, glints
Across the grass and brook ;

Bluebells nod above the sod,
Besprinkling every nook.
Flowers and birds and bending trees
Lend perfume, song, and grace ;
Yet lacks one sweet to make complete
The heav'n ; — her form and face.
For she's the goddess o' the grove,
The deity o' the dell ;
And I'm a god, for her I love
And she loves me. All's well !

The Tam-o'-Shanter Girl

With daring confidence her feet impress the crispy snow ;
Warm furs embrace her wrists and throat ; iced airs her
ringlets blow.
Upon the velvet of her cheeks, still Summer roses
burn,
And happy laughter dimples in her chin's delicious
turn.
But crowning every visual charm,— one warm, trium-
phant red, —
Is the tipsy tam-o'-shanter perched upon her jaunty head.
A fleck of crimson — two twin stars — glow — glory ! —
that's her face ;
A magical progression, lithely firm, — and that's her
grace.
She forms a bud of her two lips, and whistles as she
goes,
While saucy independence haunts the angle of her
nose.

The lilt of your blithe music sets my senses in a whirl,
Oh, wanton, wayward Christabel, my tam-o'-shanter girl !
Come, coast with me upon my sled. I'll hold you fast,
 don't fear.
(I'd never let her go again ! but this she mus'n't hear.)
 My blushing, beauteous Winter bloom, whose element
 is snow, —
 Come, shield your pearly little ears; one push, and
 down we go ! . . .
Supreme indifference masks her face, just tinctured with
 disdain ;
Yet some day we shall coast the hills of life, nor part
 again !

The Dirge of the Harp

The harp gives wild and mournful sounds
 Beneath my touch to-night, Love.
I see thee, not with great heart-bounds,
 But as a distant light, Love.

Thy beams fall not on fair, quiet land,
 But o'er a tossing ocean ;
Around my bark a devilish band
 Are making mad commotion.

The wind in crazy laughter shrieks,
 The waves attack in legions ;
My tortured vessel groans and creaks,
 And pants for calmer regions.

In frenzy I engage the waves,
And beat their heads all hoary
Until a sweat my body laves —
A sweat that's red and gory.

Yet, though I labor till I swoon,
In yearning, blind devotion,
I come no nearer that fair noon
Where thy beam weds the ocean.

Still backward drifts the battered boat;
Heart-sick, I cease to fight,
And gaze upon thy flame, afloat
Above the hills of night.

And now thou art a tiny star. . . .
And now, — the loss! — thou'rt gone.
Come, thieving Death, and steal my breath
While wind and sea laugh on.

Strength in Thrall

Two sights there are that make the angels weep —
A man in love, enmeshed in gold-brown hair;
A lion, netted in a silken snare.
The stars all thrill with pity as they peep,
For strength enslaved by weakness is despair.

The Steed Bewitched

Like an unruly charger pranced my heart.

I threw my weight against the bit. In vain.

“ ‘Sdeath! I *will* master you,” I cried. The pain
Of wounded pride began the sweat to start.

Impotent as you wind-disposéd fane
I held the bridle of unbridled Love.

The aching shoulder and the swelling wrist
Agonized uselessly. Where’er it list
My charger galloped. I, proud as high Jove
But late, now weakly swayed in blinding mist.

Day after day I essayed to regain
Power o’er the brute that scorned my puppet reign.
Where’er it would it swept — an avalanche.
Yet, swept we street or highway, lane or field, —
Whether I seemed to guide, or knew to yield, —
No path but led us to the Lady Blanche!

A Song of To-day

“ Many years ago,” — they tell thee, Darling,

“ Love and Romance sadly left this earth;
With them fled the sweetest note of starling,

Brightest colors, truest tones of mirth.

When the market’s murmur drowned the murmur

Of the happy brook as it flowed,
And the shepherd’s pipes were left
Decaying in some cleft, —

Love and Romance, spurned, took the road.”

Refrain :

Do not believe them, for 'tis not so.
Heart's joy, I love thee ! though mad winds blow
Fear shall not touch thee ; tears shall not start ;
Both Love and Romance, Sweet, dwell in my heart.

Still the rosy morning climbs the hill-side ;
Birds awake, and sing their old, sweet tunes ;
Flowers blush and bloom at every rill-side ;
Still come tinted Mays and perfect Junes.
Let their puling pipes decay in silence —
Nobler strains now pulse the prow-cut bay.
Live within the past who will,
That living is but ill
With such joys as these, Love, today.

Refrain :

Do not believe them, for 'tis not so.
Heart's joy, I love thee ! though mad winds blow
Fear shall not touch thee ; tears shall not start ;
Both Love and Romance, Sweet, dwell in my heart.

Archery

Once, beside a glum old stream,
In a glade that was agleam
With the green and gold of sun-touched vegetation,
There met a Youth and Maid ;
Low bowed each flower and blade
To manhood's morn, and beauty's incarnation.

Long he gazed in rapt surprise,
Love bright-burning in his eyes

Till his eyes his love no longer could contain ;
So it flashed forth to her heart
In the shape of Cupid's dart,
And filled it with a strange, delicious pain.

Then a sigh sprang from her breast
As a sky-lark from its nest —
'T was such a sigh as sighs the wind-swept lute,
Half music, and half tears.
Hope smothered by false fears
{Breathed forth in that low sound, and left her mute.

Her eyes were vestal fires ;
Such violet flame inspires
The sons of men to dare and do — and die.
Behind her finger-tips
Half-hid, the curving lips
Were red-rose petals, dew-wet, sweetly shy.

How it happened neither knew,
But her fears took wings and flew —
He was pleading with an eloquence divine.
'T was the ecstasy of rest
As her head heaved with his breast,
And they drank of love as drunkards drink of wine.

Then, peeping through the leaves,
Cupid laughs as he perceives
How his well-directed shaft has found the clout.
“ This money,” quoth he, “ may
Make the mare go, as they say,
But love it is that wheels the world about.”

Haunted

My Love is dead. Yet day and night
 My Love is ever near;
For this I know by sound and sight,
 And, knowing, never fear.

In drops of warm and limpid rain
 His ghostly kisses come;
He whispers in the rustling grain,
 Yet say they, Death is dumb!

His eyes gaze down, two pitying stars,
 Into mine own upraised;
He knocks against the unseen bars —
 The wood-bird stops, amazed.

And when a gauzy mist uplifts
 Betwixt the earth and moon,
His own loved form the vapor rifts,
 And comes a whisper: "Soon!"

"Soon!" — ah, my Love, I tranquil wait,
 Till death's dissolvent wine
Shall free my soul to join its mate
 Beyond life's thin sky-line.

The Bezel and the Jewel

The eye may tire of the senseless flower
With its constant blush and its one perfume ;
It sways as the wind lists, hour by hour,
And breeds contempt with its brainless bloom.

Oh, bards may chant of the dying glow
That reddens the fields and the rip'ning grain ;
Or sing of the moon on the pallid snow —
A silver world 'neath the gleaming Wain.

The color-mad, with his dripping brush,
May strive to mirror the running sea.
Aye, grandeur lives in the waves' wild rush,
But what are ocean and land to me ?

I dive in the ocean of thine eyes ;
Or, pillow'd upon thy perfumed breasts
That mimic the surge in its fall and rise,
My head, both soothed and bewildered, rests.

And what is the flush of the lifeless flower
To the blood of thy cheeks, that can ebb and flow ?
There's a whiteness framed by thy tresses' bower —
Where now is the whiteness of moon-lit snow ?

I love the world with its sun above,
Its forest, its lake, and its circling sea ;
Yet 't is but the bezel, the setting, Love,
For the matchless jewel, — for thee !

The Bounds of Change

First, green-eyed Spring; then, Summer's breaths and
bowers;

Through hectic Autumn's sweets, white Winter's hours, —
This were a cycle of unfeigned delight;
Let golden day dissolve to silver night;
Or thunder put the Sun himself to flight.

Change is but joy, so one thing be unchanged —
God grant our mutual Loves ne'er be estranged!

The Flagellation

A Duologue 'Twixt Spirit And Flesh

Here, demon, here, within this concave cell,
Removed from human contact and the world,
We fight our battle to the death. Aye, well
Thou know'st the flag of conflict is unfurled.

Oft have I scourged thee, oft ejected thee
After long struggle and exhausting prayer;
Then slept, and dreamed, exultant, I was free;
To wake — and find thee, hideous, crouching there!

O Flesh, and all of foul that fair name means!
Never hast thou assailed me thus before.
Where found'st thou this thy weapon? — sense careens,
Sore-smitten bark, before thy tempest's power.

And what's the centre of this passionate whirl —
Some mighty principle? some Pluto-force? . . .

A woman! — nay, a girl, a slender girl
Thou hast transformed, to turn my Heav'n-set course.

God hath ordained that man should love. Aye, true.

But with respect to this, — if all men served
Their God as well as most men serve and sue
Their mistresses, with purposes unswerved,

No further need, then, of these earthly loves —
Man's debt to Nature would be fully paid,
And amorous animals and cooing doves
Give place to life that higher laws obeyed.

I am a voice from out the wilderness
To cry that Second Coming, and to warn;
That voice, once tuned to weak love-tenderness,
Were like great Samson, wrecked and woman-shorn.

Canst thou forget her throat, like ivory pure
Tinged with soft light reflected from pink buds?
Or how, more golden than Wealth's golden lure,
Her loosened tresses fall in shimmering floods?

Aye, demon, aye; the singeing lash shall burn
That memory from its lodgment in the flesh,
And with its purifying fire shall turn
To ash the net that would my soul enmesh.

I must not think on violet. *That's her gown.*
Nor yet of sunshine — *Prisoned in her hair.*
The very night reminds me — *Of her frown;*
The day-dawn — *Of the smile her red lips wear.*

Out, out upon thee ! No, I'll hear no more.

I'll think on Christ; e'en from Christ's wounded
eyes —

She looks and wounds! Thou speak'st of wounds ? —
thick gore

Shall choke thy hellish utterance, drown thy cries !

Pain is a birth, the dawning of a day

When light and truth their inward peace confer ;
Joy, blinding noon, when blest shade wastes away.

Her's is the pain, if thou abandon her!

I'll argue thee no longer. *But her cheek, —*

The dimples that thy lips would make their goal ?
Peace ! — fruit to tempt a man to play the sneak :

Pits, gaping to engulf my dizzy soul !

And She, — She will forget — Ah, demon, hence ! —

Now have I capitalized a living sin

And thus made capital mine own offense.

Thy death must for me Heav'n's forgiveness win.

Have at thee, then ! Thin stripes worse hurts shall heal ;

The leathern thongs shall cure my woful ills ;

Useless thy crafts, unheeded thine appeal ;

Sweet, poignant pain unholy passion stills.

· · · · ·

The evil leaves me with the blood's red rain.

I see Thee, Christ! . . . Thank God for peace. . . and
pain.

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